



The Integral Dimensions of Mysore

PHOENIX



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Another Non-event

With the best of intentions, dance, music or any fine arts programmes organised by the Government are not free from shortcomings. No doubt, separate ministries have been set up at both State and Central level for the promotion of fine arts. One of the ways of achieving the objective, naturally is to organise programmes and festivals. There is all-round appreciation of the move, the artistes themselves showing willingness to take part in all such events. Firstly, they can be free from the hassles of organisation. Secondly, the assured pecuniary benefits cannot be ignored!

But after more than one such programme, the artistes seemingly come out more disillusioned about such outings. Not long ago, there was occasion to comment in these columns about the unsavoury incident that disrupted the prestigious Rajgir dance festival in Bihar. The utter disrespect displayed by the Chief

Minister who had earlier inaugurated the three-day fare hurt the feelings of the famed dancer so much that she abruptly cut short her performance and walked off the state, declaring that she would never again take part in such festivals. The other equally reputed artistes billed for the following days also took umbrage and refused to dance in the festival, verily putting an end to the festival!

What transpired in a more recent festival of dance nearer home was no less humiliating. It was a gala event organised by the South Zone Cultural Centre at Tanjore. Karnataka happens to be one of the States, besides Kerala and Tamil Nadu, coming under this centre. Fortunately, one of our senior dancers was invited to dance in that prestigious festival on the eve of Shivaratri. The locale being the hallowed precincts of the famous Brihadeeswara temple, she was agog at the prospect and got ready with all the

requisite paraphernalia.

But once she reached the arena, all ready to go on the stage, a big shock awaited her. She was completely disheartened to see that the dancing area was on a rostrum more than 40 feet above the ground level. That meant she would be verily dancing in the heavens, far beyond the visual reach of her audience. Which she felt would not serve the purpose as from that height, there could be no rapport with the viewers. Her arguments fell on deaf ears of an unrelenting bureaucracy. Finally, she explained to them that having gone all the way and having received the fees in advance, she would not like to disappoint them. Nor would she run through the entire card. But to fulfil a commitment she danced for just three minutes and called it a day!

Thus ended another inglorious government festival of dance. Verily another non-event!

—S.N. Chandrasekhar

Stress on 'Manodharma' in Musicians' Meet

The 29th annual Musicians' Conference organised by the Karnataka Ganakala Parishat, in February 1999 at the Bangalore Gayana Samaja Hall was presided over by Veena Vidushi Rajalakshmi Thirunarayanan. Dr. H. Narasimhaiah, former Vice-Chancellor of Bangalore University inaugurated and Y.K. Muddu Krishna, Director, Kannada and Culture, was the Chief Guest.

The 3-day academic sessions included the Birth Centenaries of Mrudanga Ratnakara H. Puttachar and Sangeetha Kalanidhi Chittoor Subramanya Pillai. Symposia on opportunities of Veena programmes and some aspects of Dikshitar, salient aspects of Kambodi and Yadukula Kambodi and a demonstration on Veena teaching methods were on the agenda. A paper on a rare musical text "SANGEETA GNAANA KALAANU-BHAVA", a demonstration of the only stringed percussion instrument Gethu Vaadya were also there. Rajalakshmi



Conference President Rajalakshmi Thirunarayanan

summed up each event adroitly and succeeded as a competent President.

Concerts included recitals of Nagaswara, Veena, Jalatharang and a full-fledged concert to mark the Birth Centenary of Chittoor Subramanya Pillai, Vocal recitals and a Sugama sangeeta event.

A. R. Chandrasah Gupta, Secretary, Kannada and Culture, conferred the title "Ganakala Bhushane" on conference president Rajalakshmi Thirunarayanan. Dr. N. Pattabhiraman, Editor, *SRUTI* felicitated R.N. Doraiswamy, M.S. Ramaiah, N.R. Krishna Murthy, Gudibande Ramachar, C.K. Shankaranarayana Rao and

Garland Rajagopalan. Dr. Pattabhiraman in his address referred to the deterioration of Manodharma aspects of Classical music in preference to number of Kritis, thus sacrificing the improvisatory aspects.

The conference was financially assisted by the Directorate of Kannada and Culture, and 17 other sponsors, besides several endowments.

Concerts

On the concert side, there was hardly anything unpredictable, though talentwise it was not wanting. But not unexpectedly the Parishat's persistent efforts to scout fresh prospects was again a



T.S. Satyavati



Talavaadya Seminar "Chandes of Thenku Thittu and Badagu Thittu"

damp squib. Not even a single first sessions in the evenings seemed to attract listeners outside the artistes' own ambit.

This phenomenon is not exclusive to the Parishat, the scene being not much different in such experiments elsewhere. Yet the effort certainly should not be abandoned. Perhaps some modifications in the scheduling could still be worthwhile.

In the other slots, there were quite a few familiar names, besides the customary conference President Rajalakshmi Thirunarayanan's veena solo.

Among the others, the even-paced Sri Raga varnam gave R.S. Ramakanth a sedate start. Lambodara (Kambodi) was more lively, though the frills appeared longish. Pantuvarali was authentic both in its modal frame and gait. It was a pleasant fare, though Ramakanth is certainly

capable of greater resonance in his rendition.

K. Vageesh (Delhi) unleashed some rare melodies like Sharadapriya, though they could not help build an instant rapport. His Lalithe fell short in its motif. Perhaps an unsteady modulation robbed the rendition of its sensitive appeal.

K.G. Kanakalakshmi and the seasoned Vidyabushans were in fine touch, while T.S. Sathyavati who drew exclusively on Kannada ditties, gave a good account of her scholarly approach, answering the demands of both Dhatu and Mathu convincingly. No wonder she was awarded the annual Ananya award.

The concluding concert featured veteran Trichur V. Ramachandran. He was in fine fettle. The pick of the evening was Natabhairavi, though the treatment for the kriti could not rise above the pedestrian. But his

Shankarabharanam was more satisfying.

Thaalavaadya Seminar

Around the same time, the Percussive Arts Centre, the sole organisation working for the promotion of Percussive Arts organised its 5th Seminar, Kanaka Purandara Awardee M.S. Ramaiah inaugurated the seminar. Dr. Prabhakara Joshi of Mangalore and V.V. Parameshwar of Udupi demonstrated "CHANDES of Thenku Thittu and BADAGU Thittu".

In a highly informative and interesting demonstration, the similarities and differences of the Chandes were exhibited and academic contents explained. Dr. Choodamani Nandagopal highlighted "References to Laya Vaadyaas in inscriptions, sculptures, paintings, etc.", illustrated with suitable slides.

H.S. Anasuya Kulkarni demonstrated "Drums of Papua New Guinea and Uganda" and explained the salient rhythms used in these instruments.

P. Nambiathan Nambudiri and party demonstrated Chande of Kerala, Idakka and Ellathalam with suitable narrations.

A. Veerabhadriah, senior violinist delivered the valedictory address.

The seminar was co-sponsored by the Central Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi.

—FAC

Lesser Known Mysore Composers

—Bangalore K. Venkataram

For nearly two centuries, from around 1350, Vijayanagar was the cultural centre of South India. After the fall of the Vijayanagar empire in the War of Taalikote in 1565, the Centre shifted to Tanjore. During the 17th, 18th and first-half of 19th Century, Tanjore was considered the principal seat of Music. After the annexation of Tanjore by the British (around) in 1856, MYSORE emerged as a seat of Music (19th and first half of 20th centuries)

The contribution of Mysore Kings to Music in the period 1800-1950, is laudable. Even prior to this, various dynasties which ruled Mysore patronised Music: Kadambas, Gangas, Chalukyas, Pallavas, Cholas, Kathachuryas, Hoysalas, Yadavas).

But the support was significant during the Wodeyars 15th to 18th Century. The topic is restricted to this area and period. Vachanakaars and Dasa Koota are not included in this context. While some of these composers are VERY WELL KNOWN, some are LESSER KNOWN.

They are: 1. Veena Venkatagiriappa (1887-1951) : Guru of Padma-bushan, Sangeetha Kalanidhi Dr. V. Doraswamy Iyengar, performed at the Music

Academy in 1938, a versatile composer of Varnas, Kritis, Thillanas, Ragamalikas and a unique form 'Nagma'. Honoured with the title Vainika Shikamani by Kanchi Jagadguru on 13-10-1929. Among his composition the Varna in Behag is noteworthy for the 'Ga' Anthyas in the Chitta Swaras, notable Daatu-prayogas in "Ethugada Swaras". Very difficult for vocal rendition because of requirements of Sthaayi Shuddha. His Ankitha is "Sadashiva".

2. Belakavady Srinivasa Iyengar (Elder) 1888-1936 : A noted composer who published "Ganamrutha". Two of his Jatiswaras in Kambodi and Hamsadwani have been published in this book. Among his varnas only two have come to light.

The second half of his Atathala Varna in Mayamalavagoula is noteworthy for the Ragabhava and Swara Jodane. His Ankitha is "Srinivasa".

3. Chikka S. Rama Rao (1892-1946) : He was a Palace Vidwan in the Court of Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wodiyar. He was called "Chikka" because there was an elder Rama Rao in the Palace Drama Troupe. He was sent to participate in the All India Music Conference at Baroda under the guidance of Vishnu Narayana Bhatkhande.

Till the end of the conference he had not been accommodated at all. When the youngster sang in the end, there was encommiums galore.

He was a desciple of Sangeetha Kanteerava Karagiri Rao and had guidance of Bidaram Krishnappa. The title Sangeetha Rathna was conferred on him by Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wodiyar. His domestic life was very unhappy.

Among his compositions, "Vedavinuthane" (Naata set to Misra Chappu) was noteworthy for its Chittaswara, "Rama" and "Devotama" were his "Ankithas".

4. Veena Subbanna (1854-1939) : He has composed Jatiswaras, Varnas, Kritis, Thillanas, Javalis and Ragamalika. The Music Academy Journal has published a Ragamalika and Swarajatis and a Kriti in 1972. He belonged to the Parampara of Adappaiah. He was the son of Dodda Seshanna. He was brought up in an affluent atmosphere and learnt from his father and vocal music under Mysore Sadashiva Rao.

5. Flute H. Narasinga Rao (1898-1936) Born on 9-11-1898 he had the guidance of Palladam Sanjeeva Rao who was the guest of his parents. He made his debut in 1918 before Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wodiyar, Thayappa, Puttappa,

Puttaswamy Arunachalappa, Puttachar, Manjunathan and others accompanied him.

His hosue hosted stalwarts like Ariyakudi, Palladam, Mylathur Krishna Iyer, Karur Chinnaswamy Iyer, Marungapuri Gopalakrishna Iyer, Madras Balakrishna Iyer, Papa, V.D. Paluskar and others.

Veena Seshanna had attended his wedding and the next day he played Veena with Narasinga Rao on the flute. Narasinga Rao was an adept in freehand drawing-carpentry etc. and was a prolific teacher.

His 108 compositions were taken for publication, but were never returned. He started Nadavinodini Sabha in 1931 to promote youngsters and had to sell his diamond ring to pay for Maharajapuram Vishwanatha

Iyer. He passed away on 13-12-36 at the age of 38 years and had a number of promising deciples.

6. *Veena Padmanabhiah (1847-1906)*: His appointment in the court has an interesting background. He offered encouragement to all young talents. Mysore Vasudevachar has written extensively on the life and achievements of his Guru Padmanabhiah. He has composed several noteworthy pieces.

His Ankitha was "Padmanabha".

7. *Mysore Sadashiva Rao*, a prashishya of Thyagaraja, his compositions have been published by Mysore Sangeetha Kalabhihruddhini Sabha in 1954 and later by the Madras Music Academy. He was a reputed Vaggeyakara, Varakavi. Among his

desciples are Veena Sheshanna and Subbanna, Bettadapurada Shamanna, Hanagal Chidambaram (Guru of Chintalapalli Venkata Rao who has kept Sadashiva Rao's compositions as sung by his Guru), Chikkanayakanahalli Venkateshaiah, Ganjam Suryanarayanaappa and others. His compositions as collected from his prashishyas have now been published.

A *Ragamalika* which contains Raga Mudra (intelligent combination), Chitta Swaras with type Rhythmic structures including Jatis, Paruttham (end formation) in Swaras are of aesthetic value and highly artistic. His Ankitha is "Sadashiva".

(Excerpts from paper presented in the academic sessions of Music Academy, Chennai, at its Conference 1998).

Bal Kalakars Impress

REPORT

The 19th Bal Sangeet Sammelan of Swar Sadhna Samiti, Mumbai, on November 15, 1998 at Kelewadi, Girgaum, was as memorable as its earlier ones.

The programme started with "Saraswati Vandana" sung by the students of the Wadia Sangeet Class, followed by vocal, instrumental and Dance items of Various and hue. All the items were staged by the trophy



L to R: Swetha Sethumadhavan, Aditya Ajaonkar, Srilaxmi Pillai, Baby Gayatri Acharya 2nd row Shreyas Ravi, Nikhil Prabhu, Mansi Phadke, Aparajita Ghosh, Shreya Ayub, Namrata Gupta

winners of Swar Sadhna Samiti's annual All India Music and Dance

Competition held in January 1998.

The Bal Kalakars enthralled the audiences with their talented performances and were felicitated by Samiti President, Jitendra R. Zaveri. The Founder Patron of Swar Sadhna Samiti, Dr. Aban E. Mistry, Felicitated the Gurus of the Young artistes and congratulated the parents for their efforts and interest in promoting their wards.

The Musical Hermitage of Mysore

It is Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the great saint of Dakshineswar who said "all mortals are mad after one thing or the other. Blesses are those who are mad after God". It is to this latter category that the ochre-clad Sadhus of our country belong.

Even here, each one of these god-men has adopted a path of his own for God realisation. If some among them adopt the dictum "Dukhi Narayano Bhava" as enunciated by Swami Vivekananda to achieve the emancipation of the suffering humanity, there are others who believe in spreading education, by establishing schools, colleges and hostels. Yet some others build

hospitals to meet the health needs of society. They all consider that serving humanity is the best way to serve god.

There is yet another type of Maths which believe in Bhakti as the easiest and simplest path to realise God. And the easiest way to cultivate Bhakti is chanting of His name. Music is the ideal vehicle for continuous chanting and spreading the message of our immortal singing-minstrels. Filled with sequences connected with the divine 'leelas' of the different manifestations of the Supreme Being, reciting the compositions of those saint-singers not only purifies the heart but uplifts the mind too. Bhakti thus is the sacred

path sanctified by innumerable Sadhus, past and present.

One such Sadhu, Vidyabhushana has emerged to reach emotional heights in his singing. Before he gave up his Sanyas to take up a career in music, this revered vocalist had built an ideal auditorium in his erstwhile Ashram in Subramanya. His annual music festivals during that period attracted musicians and fanciers from far and wide and the fortunate who have seen it all describe them as "memorable experience" and the auditorium itself almost the ultimate in theatre!

The latest achievement in this direction in Mysore by all accounts is more exciting. Structurally, this magnificent edifice put up by Swami Ganapati Sachchidananda can stand comparison only with the historic, world-renowned Palace. But conceptually, it reminds one of the centuries-old "thousand pillared" temples of Chidambaram and Srirangam in Tamil Nadu. As obviously intended by the multi-faceted Swamiji, it is a monument in stone for music, the series of giant Tambooras that dot the columns right across the spacious hall spelling out his musical inclinations.

Yes, the Swamiji is well



General view of the Mantap

versed in music, a musicologist in his own right. His compositions are used in their concerts by many a noted vocalist like T.V. Shankaranarayanan, Neyveli Santhanam and others. He is himself an accomplished vocalist, at home both in the classical mode and bhajans. As he says "while bhojana (food) nourishes the physical presence, Bhajana purifies the mind". His bhajans comprising well-known compositions of saints in a variety of languages are soul-filling, steeped in devotional fervour. It has an electrifying influence on the listeners, transporting them to a different plane.

The Swamiji, Sathyanarayana in his 'poorvashrama' was born to a poor, but god-loving parents of a village near Meke-Daatu which is about 70 kms South-East of Bangalore. Pecuniary circumstances had forced his mother to take him to the adjoining Andhra Pradesh. But his miseries did not end there. Satham (his pet name) lost his mother when he was barely nine years old and thereafter he faced endless trials and tribulations to keep his body and soul together. At the same time, he went through schooling, though he couldn't pursue education beyond the elementary level.

Those were the days when young Sathyam always sought solitude in the vicinity of temples. It is in that solitude that he often burst out singing, his favourite



Sri Ganapati Sachchidananda Swamiji

songs being those in praise of Ganapati, Hanuman and Kanyakaparameswari. The near-by Agasthya temple and the Ramana Kuteeram were his favourite haunts during those days. It is at the Kuteeram where he started practicing meditation along with Swami Abhedananda of that Ashram. Subsequently, he emerged as the now-famous Ganapati Sachchidananda Swami, revered by countless devotees the world over as "Dattatreya Avadhoota".

His Ashrama in Mysore was founded in 1966. It had a humble beginning and is situated in the foothills of the famous Chamundi Hills on the Mysore-Ooty highway. Its sylvan surroundings and secluded ambience provide an ideal setting for an Ashram.

The new 'Music Mantapa' is an added attraction to the Ashram where the Swamiji is engaged in diverse activities for the well-being of mankind. Besides his accomplishment as a refined vocalist, he is well versed in Ayurveda, Homeopathy and has developed a herbarium which meets the medicinal needs of patients who throng the Ashram Dispensary right through the day. Indeed, the Swamiji's healing touch not only involves herbal cure but also musical therapy.

Today the Swamiji has more than 20 centres across the country and among his disciples are people belonging to all faiths, the synthesis of all religions being the Swamiji's main contribution.

ATRI

Contribution on music and dance are welcome. They should be neatly typed on one side of the paper double spaced. Adequate return postage should be enclosed for the return of unaccepted articles

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MARCH, APRIL & MAY - MUSIC CONCERTS PROGRAMME (D.V.) : DAILY 9.00 A.M., 5.15 P.M., 6.15 P.M. TO 9.30 P.M.

Thu	25.3.99	5 00 PM 6 00 PM	Inauguration by Parama Pujya H.H. Sri Ganapathy Sachchidananda Swamiji, Mysore KADRI GOPALNATH - KUMARI KANYA KUMARI - GURUVAYUR DORAI - SUKANYA RAMGOPAL - RAJASHEKARAN
Fri	26.3.99	6 15 PM	Music for Meditation & Healing-Parama Pujya H.H. SRI GANAPATHI SACHCHIDANANDA SWAMIJI (Mysore)-Dr. L. SUBRAMANYAM - T. BHAKTAVATSALAM - R. THYAGARAJAN - SUBHAS CHANDRAN - JAITRA VARANASI - SHANKAR RAMESH - MAHESH BHATT - T. RAMANUJAM
Sat	27.3.99	6 15 PM	D. SESHACHARY & D. RAGHAVACHARY (HYDERABAD BROTHERS) - PERI SRIRAMAMURTHY - ARJUN KUMAR - SRISHAILA
Sun	28.3.99	9 00 A.M. 5 15 PM 6 15 PM	STUTHI VAHINI & PARTY ROOPA NATARAJAN M.V. RAGHURAM SASHIKALA Dr. N. RAMANI, R. THIAGARAJAN & R. ATHULKUMAR (FLUTE-TRIO) - M. CHANDRASHEKARAN - GURUVAYUR DORAI - H.P. RAMACHAR
Mon	29.3.99	9 00 A.M. 5 15 PM. 6 15 PM	V. GANESH VENKATESH - VASUDEVA RAO ADARSHA SHENOY & ABHIJIT SHENOY J.K. SRIDHAR - YESHIWANTHA R.K. SRIKANTAN - M. CHANDRASHEKARAN - T.A.S. MANI - D. MOHITE
Tue	30.3.99	5 15 PM 6 15 PM	CHENNAKESHAVIAH RADHIKA H. GANESH MYSORE NAGARAJ & MYSORE Dr. MANJUNATH (VIOLIN - DUET) - PRAVEEN - S.V. RAMANI
Wed	31.3.99	5 15 PM 6 15 PM	SARASWATHI NARAYAN A. JOSHI P. JOSHI RUDRAPATNAM BROTHERS - MADHAVAN - T.A.S. MANI - S.V. RAMANI
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Fri	02.4.99	9 00 A.M. 5.15 P.M. 6 15 PM	LAKSHMI KAUSHIK - JITENDRA KISHORE - LAKSHMISH BHARATHI BALAKRISHNA (HINDUSTANI VOCAL) & PARTY O.S. THIAGARAJAN - MADHAVAN - K.V. PRASAD - A.S.N. SWAMY
Sat	03.4.99	5 15 P.M. 6 15 PM	ANASUYA ASHOK KUMAR C. MADHUSUDHAN S.V. BALAKRISHNA PROF. T.N. KRISHNAN (VIOLIN SOLO) - T. BAKTHAVATHSALAM - M.A. KRISHNA MURTHY
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Mon	12.4.99	5.15 - 7.15	MYSORE Dr. M.S. BHASKAR (HINDUSTANI VOCAL) - UMAKANTH PURANIK - RAVINDRA YAVAGAL
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Wed	14.4.99	9.00 A.M. 5.15 P.M. 6.15 P.M.	MASTER CHAITANYA KUMAR (FLUTE) - JITENDRA KISHORE - SASHIKALA LAKSHMI - RAVINDRA - JAYAPRASAD - GURU MURTHY Dr. OMAN KUTTI - S. SESHAGIRI RAO - V.S. RAJAGOPAL - A.V. KASHINATH
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Fri	16.4.99	5.15 P.M. 6.15 P.M.	D. CHANDRASHEKAR (VOCAL) - RADHIKA - D.V. PRAKASHI B.V. BALASAI (FLUTE) & ALLAM DURGA PRASAD (GOTTUVADYAM) (DUET) - PRAVEEN - M.A. KRISHNA MURTHY
Sat	17.4.99	5.15 P.M. 6.15 P.M.	AMRUTHA VENKATESH - B. LAKSHMI - LAKSHMISH S. NITHYASREE MAHADEVAN - M.S. GOVINDA SWAMY - M.T. RAJAKESARI - SUKANYA RAMGOPAL
Sun	18.4.99	9.00 A.M. 5.15 P.M. 6.15 P.M.	SUNADHA PRIYA - NADA VRINDA MASTERT N.S. KRISHNA (VOCAL) - M.V. RAGHURAM - RENUKA PRASAD KUNNAKUDI R. VAIDYANATHAN (VIOLIN SOLO) & PARTY
Mon	19.4.99	5.15 P.M. 6.15 P.M.	SOUDAMINI VENKATESH (HINDUSTANI VOCAL) & PARTY M.S. SHEELA - NALINA MOHAN - ANANTHA KRISHNA SHARMA - SUKANYA RAMGOPAL
Tue	20.4.99	5.15 - 7.15 7.30 - 9.30	LOKA V. SHANKAR (FLUTE) - M.A. KRISHNA SWAMY - RENUKA PRASAD - PRASHANTH MUDDU MOHAN (HINDUSTANI VOCAL) - RAVINDRA YAVAGAL
Wed	21.4.99	5.15 P.M. 6.15 P.M.	SRIVIDYA (VEENA) - S. PHANI KUMAR MRUNALINI MENON - S. SESHAGIRI RAO - M.T. RAJAKESARI - S.V. GIRIDHAR
Thu	22.4.99	5.15 P.M. 6.15 P.M.	SREEMATHI N. JAYARAM - N. SUNITHA - D.V. PRAKASHI ANURADHA MADHUSUDAN (VEENA) - C. CHELUVARAJ - M.A. KRISHNA MURTHY
Fri	23.4.99	5.15 P.M. 6.15 P.M.	SIYAMALA RAVIGOPAL (VEENA) - S. BHARATHAN - GIRIDHAR UDUPA PRIYA SISTERS & PARTY
Sat	24.4.99	6.15 P.M.	SUDHA RAGHUNATHAN & PARTY
Sun	25.4.99	9.00 A.M. 6.15 P.M.	MANGALORE K. ANANTHARAM (SAXAPHONE) & PARTY K.J. YESUDAS - NAGAI MURALIDHARAN - HARI KUMAR - V. SURESH
Mon	26.4.99	6.15 P.M.	SANJAY SUBRAHMANYAN - NAGAI MURALIDHARAN - T.K. MURTHY - B.K. VENKATARAM
Tue	27.4.99	6.15 P.M.	RAVIKIRAN (GOTTUVADYAM) - H.K. VENKATRAM - T.K. MURTHY
Wed	28.4.99	6.15 P.M.	BOMBAY JAYASHREE - RAMNATH & PARTY
Thu	29.4.99	6.15 P.M.	RAJKUMAR BHARATHI - M.A. SUNDARESHWARAN - V. PRAVEEN - B.R. RAVIKUMAR
Fri	30.4.99	6.15 P.M.	MADURAI T.N. SESHAGOPALAN - M.A. SUNDARESHWARAN - T.K. MURTHY - RAMANUJAM
Sat	01.5.99	6.15 P.M.	U. SHRINIVAS (MANDOLIN) - S.D. SRIDHAR - V. PRAVEEN - SHIVARAMAKRISHNAN

— MANGALAM —

— RAMASEVA

PARTICULARS : 1. All are welcome for the Morning Programmes. 2. Loud Speaker is arranged outside the Pandal for the convenience of the public upto 10 p.m. daily as per Government Rules. 3. Bus arrangements will be made after the close (9.30 p.m.) of the evening programme daily. 4. Limited space is available for Banner Advertisement—inside the pandal premises. 5. Season Passes are valid only upto 13.4.99 and in respect of the concerts from 14.4.99 Patrons and Public are kindly requested to obtain exchange slips for the passes held by them at Pandal Office from 05.4.99 as usual. 6. Sponsorship will be acknowledged by a prominent display of your banner on the stage apart from a couple of announcements in between the performance and prominent display of your banner in the pandal for a period of 40 days. 7. It is needless to say that the Mandali has undertaken this mighty task, having confidence in the generous Public and therefore makes this humble appeal to the Public once again to contribute liberally and encourage the Mandali with their kind patronage to make the celebrations a worthy success.

For Further Particulars Contact Phone : 6604031.

The Urge to Sing

Shruti Nanavaty

"Hardwork, dedication, determinationare what really make one successful." She comes back to these golden words again and again and stresses that one should believe in them. Here is a true to life success story which only further proves that real dedication, total involvement and hardwork are what good artistes are made of. And a living example of this is Vidushi Neela Ramgopal.

Born on May 25, 1935 in a traditional South-Indian family, Neela aunty as she is fondly called by her students, never had dreamed that she would one day become a thorough professional and earn accolades in the rich world of music. A career spanning over three decades,

Neela Ramgopal has performed in all the important festivals and sabhas around the country. To name a few, The Music Academy, Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, MLV Foundation, all of Chennai, the Bangalore Gayana Samaja, the Ramakrishna Sabha and Sri Guruvayurappan Gana Sabha, all of Bangalore, the Swati Tirunal Sangeeta Sabha, Trivandrum, NCPA and others at Mumbai, Rasika Ranjana Sabha, Calcutta, etc. Neela has also been performing for AIR since 1965 and has been an 'A' Grade artiste for the past 20 years. Her concerts are broadcast and telecast over the South Zone hook, National Channel, National Programme of Carnatic

Shastriya Sangeet and the Rag Darshini Programme.

With a concert history like hers, Neela has deservedly achieved her share of awards and honours. Some of the innumerable titles that she has been conferred with include 'Sangeetha Chudamani' from Rama Seva Mandali 'Gana Prakreethi' (1993) from Nagarkoil Trust, 'Sangeetha Kala Samragini' (1998) from the local Ramakrishna Gana Sabha, and recently 'Kalajyoti' from Nadajyoti Tyagaraja Bhajana Sabha. She has been honoured with coveted awards from the Music Academy, Chennai, in 1983 for Best Performer and in 1997 was given a special award from Krishna Gana Sabha, Chennai as Best Performer.

This March 1999, Neela aunty is all set for a musical tour of the US and shall be away for about three months. She will be performing, taking workshops and lecture-demonstrations while away. Let us wish her a memorable journey and a successful tour.

In a tete-a-tete our Shruti Nanavaty had with this lively performer on music-related topics...

First of all, aunty, could you brief about your family background? When



Neela in Concert
(Photo Courtesy : Smt. Neela Ramgopal)

did you develop a liking for music?

My family was traditional. I was born at Chennai, but I lived in Kumbakonam all of my childhood and I was there until my marriage. Veteran Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer used to reside just opposite our house. Those days we would listen to him singing and practising. Actually, my father was a violinist though not a professional. He would practise everyday. I used to attend music concerts with him in my childhood. Maharajpuram Vishwanatha Iyer, Semmangudi Narayanaswamy Iyer and S.V. Parthasarathy were his good friends. They used to visit us often and talk about music for hours on end. So, I suppose this influenced me to develop a keen interest for music. That is how amongst 10 children, I was the only one who took up music. I was immediately interested in music, but was not a professional until after marriage.

In those days for marriage purpose girls were taught to sing reasonably well and so like any girl I too learned songs and sang them. I had never thought that I'd come to the music field as a professional.

Then how is it that you came to opt for a musical career? Who or what inspired you to pursue it?

Yes, that was a turning point in my life. Usually, we hear musicians saying that



*Neela in Concert
(Photo Courtesy : Smt. Neela Ramgopal)*

they started learning music when they were 3 or 5 years old. But in my case, it was not so. It was only after my marriage and after becoming a mother of two children that I started learning music seriously and singing professionally.

There was an incident that brought about this change. After my marriage, every year we used to attend the music season at Chennai. There, once at some Navaratri get-together at a relative's house, I was asked to sing. There was another professional singer and both of us sang that day. I sang as I used to in my amateur way, while she sang better and may be more impressively. Everyone kept praising her singing. As a young 19 year old, I felt bad and embarrassed, tears welled up my eyes. I felt so much that there and then I decided to learn music. I

should do something about it. There was this burning urge to sing. And that was the turning point in my life.

So when you took this decision was it your father or your mother who encouraged you?

In traditional families of old a girl was not allowed to go out and sing. That is why although Semmangudi was residing just opposite and I could have learnt from him, I was not allowed. Even though I was so interested, society did not allow singing outside and so only after sometime was I allowed. So none of my parents was encouraging because of this. Moreover, mine was also not a musical family. My father was a violinist only as a hobby. Perhaps it has come down to me in blood.

So from whom did you eventually take training in music?



Neela at her daily 'riyas'

After marriage and mothering two children, we came down to Bangalore for good. I asked my husband to find me a teacher for music. My first guru was an elderly person. I learned from him for about 3 to 4 years, but was not very happy. We never failed to attend the season concerts at Music Academy-Chennai both being life-members. There, there was one Sri N.M. Narayana (of *The Hindu*) who was a family friend. He was a good classical musician. He sensed my anguish and saw my interest in music. He took interest in me and started lessons immediately. Within a week I picked up and grasped many good points from him. From then on, i.e., from 1959 onwards, every year I would go to Chennai for an intensive course of 15 days. He would teach me everyday in the morning, from 6 to 10, without a break. He was so affectionate towards me he

took all the pains to teach everything. We had a very homely atmosphere. Since I used to get training for 4 to 5 hours a day, it was verily like a Gurukula. The quality of my music improved. I would come back and practise all that I learnt and keep singing. This went on for 10 to 15 years. Then I felt there was no continuity in the method of learning. So we decided to bring T.K. Rangachari from Chennai to Bangalore. He was known for his rich *Bhava* and fidelity to the classical virtues. He started coming to Bangalore every month, stay here for a week and give lessons and get back.

You were part of a music group.

Yes, during that time a Tamil group called '*Sathguru Sangeetha Samajam*' or S.S.S. came to be formed. There were seven of us, viz., Seethalakshmi Venkatesan, Jambu Kannan, Saraswati Ramachandran, Tilaka Sampath, Vishalam Krishnan, Rajalakshmi Venkataraman and myself. We all used to get together and sing. In fact we were eventually called the Sapthswaras!! We started performing from 1968 as a group and would go places to sing. We used to practise thrice a week and teach one another songs. This way we gained so much music and exposure. We used to also perform in Delhi, Nagpur, Bhopal and enjoyed many kacheris as a group. people

would say that two can sing, three can sing, but wondered how seven could sing together? Yes, there would be 7 of us ladies and two to three accompanists on stage.

Due to this we got a lot of exposure and many new programmes. Even reputed musicians like M.S. Subbulakshmi was pleased with us when we performed at Krishna Gana Sabha, Chennai. She was kind to arrange a concert for us. Even at Thiruvaiyar, we got a good response. Thereafter for about ten years all of us became busy and priorities changed and the group slowly disintegrated. Out of the seven Seetha Mami and myself are still singing. Though Jambu Kannan sings, she is no more a busy professional. But in my case I am still going strong and steady performing.

When did you give your first solo performance?

My first concert was in 1965 during the Ramanavami season in Bangalore. One of the performers didn't come on time, and so all of a sudden the organisers called me up and asked me to sing instead. It was a good chance for me.

Who are the people who have been a continuous source of inspiration to you, in your musical journey? The people behind your success.

All through, my husband Sri Ramgopal, a keen connoisseur of music, has

been the pillar to my success. He even now, records my music and does all the organising. He has been very supportive and helps me in all my endeavours and journeys. I take inspiration from all the giants of the music world. I idolise M.L. Vasanthakumari the most. Even my style resembles that of MLV and am more inclined towards her style.

In the course of your pursuit of music, did you find any event of interest that occurred?

Yes, there have been many. I would like to mention this particular one. A rich lady who used to listen to me over the radio and T.V. happened to meet me at a music sabha. The next day she called up and asked me to teach her music. I started lessons for her and after a few lessons her husband thanked me profusely for the help done to his wife. She was a patient with psychological ailment. She is slowly improving and the doctors are surprised with her speedy recovery. Music has a soothing effect on people with depression. I felt happy that I could bring some relief to that lady and her husband.

What is the role of a performer today? What are the qualities of a good performance?

First of all the voice must be pleasant and whenever a concert is heard one should get that feel, the feel of peace, feel of music. The technical aspects should be there, but



not in a very heavy dose. Above all it should touch your heart, nothing to do with the mind. Also the artistes who sing must know the meaning of the words of songs. Only then can they sing with *Bhava*. That is important. Without knowing the words some people sing and break the words haphazardly. Due to this the "Sahitya bhava" is lost. One should know how to go about how to project the voice and modulate, how to deliver. Then only could it be called a good and pleasant performance. There are many who have attained fame. Fame is different and quality is different.

Your opinion of today's audience. Do you receive the same feedback as in the past, from them?

Generally, now-a-days people do not want a heavy recital except for old people like us. But the new

generation do not want heavy pieces like *Orangashai*, *Mari mari Vinninne*, etc. They prefer music in a nutshell. Only the serious-minded the elderly enjoy a classical fare. Yes, the encouragement and feedback that was given to artistes in the past is almost a thing of the past. Now if you sing a real classical piece the audience cannot enjoy because now people do not like the old way of singing. There is no time for elaborate Raga-swara. But I wouldn't classify all the audience as one. Some still like the old way. It depends on the place where the concerts are held. Eg., the Music Academy is still good. There one can be sure of good rapport and feedback. Audience there expect standard classical music. Also the old sabhas of Bangalore like Gayana Samaja are good and have a knowledgeable audience. Even in Odukattur Matt Hall the audience seemingly enjoy music with depth, only classical music sustains there. Whereas in festivals like Ramanavami Pandal people come for a few light classical items and *devarnamas*. So I have no choice than to cater to that taste!

You have given numerous concerts. Which would you consider your memorable one(s)?

In 1969-70 we, that is our group of seven, had been to Delhi for a concert. In that concert I had an opportunity to lead and sing the main



item. It was appreciated a lot and there was a big write-up about it from Subbudu of Delhi. That was my first review and I was very thrilled about it.

In 1982, at Guruvayurappan Bhajana Samaj, mine was considered as the best amongst the ten concerts.

Another one was the 1997 concert at the Music Academy. They had asked me to do a special feature on *Kannada Dasa Padas*. During the last item *Vrutam* or *Uga-bhoga* which I had sung for about 20 minutes, the people were left spellbound and I got a special prize for that. That was a memorable concert.

What has to be one's genuine concern to be a successful teacher?

First of all one should have a genuine interest in teaching. Secondly, one should

find out the psychology of the student and teach her. Give her encouraging words. The intricacies of music could then be explained as progress is made. The students that come to me are at different levels. Some pick up rapidly while some are slow-learners with whom one has to be patient. I feel music is one thing that one should have in the blood. You must have it in you. Some say that by teaching you exhaust your vocal chords. That is not true. I have been teaching for more than 35 years and yet I have not lost my voice. I still perform with the same voice which is as good as before.

How has teaching helped you? Do you believe and approve of 5 to 6 year old children learning music and even performing?

By teaching you gain a lot. One is continuously correct-

ing oneself. Teaching is a good thing. Seeing a student blossom into a good artiste is a pleasure to any teacher. That makes me happy.

No, it is not a right to have 5 to 6 year old children performing however smart they may be. As a vocalist, the accent may sound childish and cannot be relished. For instrumentalist to an extent it is okay. I am against putting young children on the stage. I feel at that age it is okay if they sing *bhajans*. For serious training the right age is not below 10 years and before performing there should be training for 10 to 15 years.

Your comments on the new trends being practised on the performing front. The recent development of Jugalbandis—does it promote music?

No, I do not think *Jugalbandis* promote music. I have never liked it. The concept does not allow you to enjoy any of the music. It is like mixing up two different sweets. Not only do the audience get divided but even the performers can't do justice. There is no question of unity. Both sing their own way. There is no music. It is not possible to blend two styles.

Have you done any Jugalbandis?

Yes, I did one with Shanta Jayatirtha at Devagiri Sangeetha Sahha and never again.

The world of music has been your home for over three decades. What has music come to mean to you?

Music is my life. In my own experience, music and will power have saved me from a major ailment. I wonder how people live without music. How is it possible for them to be without it? For me, it is unthinkable. It is not possible to live without music.

How do you react to budding artistes of today? Is it encouraging or do you think today's music has veered away from what was prescribed in the ancient texts?

I wouldn't say it has veered away. People have become more intelligent now-a-days. There is more technicalities. Only you cannot find that 'Giant' quality in them. We have seen many musical giants. Hardly any one can be called a giant today. They do not have that instinct and capability to become a giant in music. Otherwise, I feel that all are good and am not unhappy with their music. But I do feel that now-a-days people are coming on the stage prematurely. In our times we would be recognised and come out only when we were in our 40's or 50's. Today, 20 year olds get recognition and become overnight stars. In our times, only with hardwork one could come up.

That is the difference.

That way all the present artistes are continuing their mentor's trend. They are all following the lineage of old giants like D.K. Jairaman, GNB and MLV, etc. They are singing the same thing, only they have gained popularity at a younger age.

What genuine advice would you give them?

Have *Bhakti* in and in learning music. They must practice well, that's all.

You have been honoured and acquired lot of fame. Out of these which honour do you consider the most precious and dear to your heart?

Aah! a very good question. One is the special prize that I received from Music Academy in 1997 for the Dasa Padas. And last year I got title 'Sangeeta Kala Samragini' from Ramakrishna Gana Sabha, Bangalore. They honoured meo beautifully with a pure heart for my work. I was really touched and it is my best so far.

If you review your life at this point, what do you see as your achievements?

If I review my life I see

that I have been made a musician by Nature and God. I was so ordinary in my younger days and I never thought and I'd become a musician. That is my achievement. I have the satisfaction of achieving whatever I aspired for. So only with hardwork, dedication and determination have I achieved and come up. So to be an achiever one has to have determination and conviction.

After music, what other hobbies do you have?

I adore cooking. And I used to interview many people as a journalist for sometime.

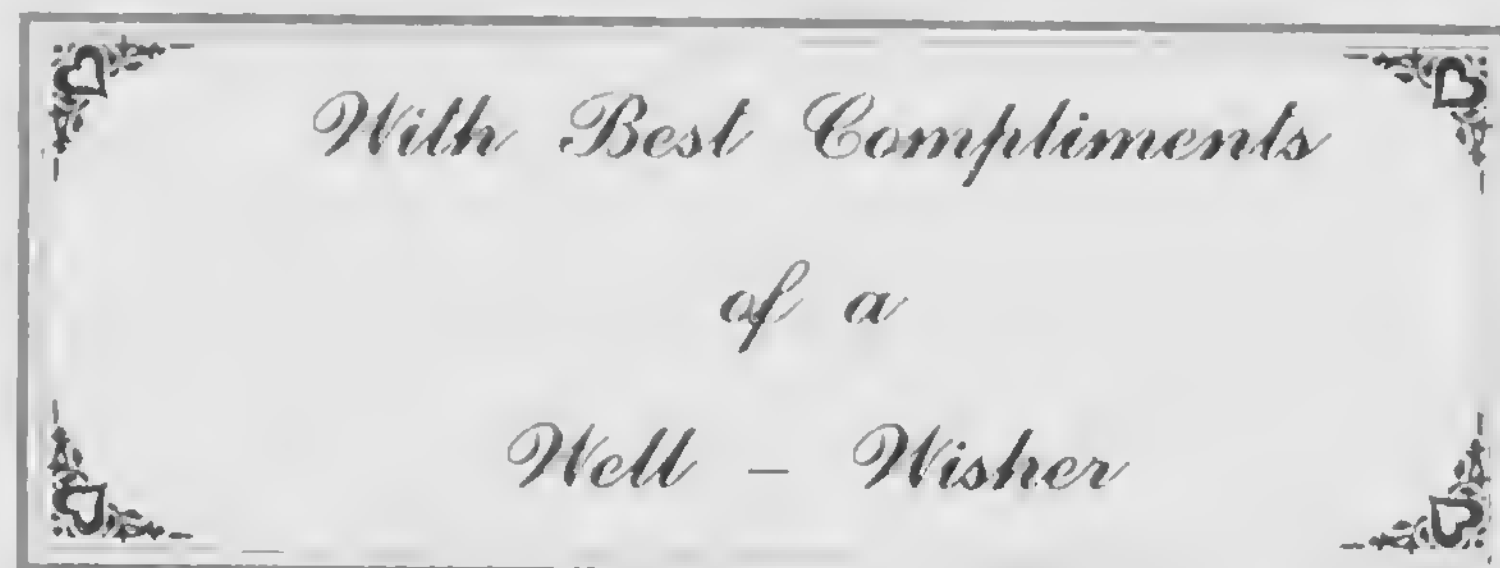
Then I have also written a few Tamil stories. Otherwise my whole day goes in things related to music such as teaching, learning, listening and performing. I go for many concerts and am most of the time performing.

A parting Question. Which question would you like to be asked and its answer?

This needs some thinking... All right! the question is: Music takes you to *Moksha*.

Comment. And my answer is, I would like to be born again to continue singing!

□



King of Ragas, Raga of Kings

—S.N. Sivaswamy

The king of ragas and the raga of kings. That is, of course, Darbari Kanada (Darbari for short in Hindustani music and Kanada for short in Carnatic music). And the raga as far as I am concerned, has never failed to evoke a royal atmosphere to envelop the listeners.

My experience of the beauty and grandeur of raga Kanada began when I was a very young boy and off and on heard my mother sing while doing her domestic chores, the Kannada devotional "Ramanama Bhajisidavarige". It was a simple, soft plaintive melody and it appealed to my aesthetic sense as did few other songs in those days.

As a youngster, I had the opportunity of attending my first public concert of Madurai Mani Iyer at the Malleshwaram Sangeetha Sabha when he sang the immortal "Sukhiyevvaro" which he seemed to enjoy singing as much as the audience listening. He was at his imaginative best, especially during the 'Kalpana' swaras which he rattled off in a spirit of great abandon, spinning out creative swara patterns which had never been heard before in such abundance.

Since then he has thrilled me with his fanciful Kanada

dozens of times. If it was not "Sukhiyevvaro", it was another classic "Sri Narada", but the exciting swara combinations were always there in Madurai Mani Iyer's recitals.

Like "Ramanama Bhajisidavarige", there was another simple Kannada composition which I found most enchanting in my younger days. That was "Manasu Karagade Swami". Yet another Devaranama which I am never tired of listening and humming, is available in cassette even now. It is "Sadayenna hridayadalli vasa mado Srihari" sung most soulfully by Bhimsen Joshi. Of course, Kanada at its softest and sweetest is also available in the recorded Meera bhajan "Hari Tum Haro", an unforgettable rendering by M.S. Subbulakshmi.

Hindustani musicians accord their Darbari an exalted place in their repertoire and approach the raga with utmost reverence. It is said to have been composed by Tansen at the court of Emperor Akbar. Since then generations of great musicians have let their imagination weave sheer magic out of this raga, exploiting its 'gandhara' and 'dhaivata' to the hilt. Listening to the record of Vilayat Khan's Darbari on sitar has transported me to

another world with its dexterity, while Amir Khan's vocal rendering, also available on records is a unique aesthetic experience. Amjad Ali Khan, the famous sarod artiste, has devoted both sides of a long playing disc for Darbari.

Coming back to Carnatic music, another composition in Kanada comes to my mind, along with the extraordinary talent of the singer who used to render it in a highly individualistic, if not equally florid style. I am referring to "Mamavasada Janani" which used to be a masterpiece of G.N. Balasubramaniam. In his heyday his concerts always drew full houses. GNB had a ringing voice and his 'sangatis' were noted for their magnificent 'birghas' and this Kanada composition perfectly matched his specialised style of singing.

And then, how can one forget the lilting 'Thillana' of Veena Seshanna while writing about Kanada! Perhaps it is the most popular of all 'Thillanas', and has been essayed by all the great vainikas of our country. A lesser noticed 'Thillana' is the one composed by the versatile violinist, Lalgudi Jayaraman, a brilliant and innovative effort which I have no doubt will stand the test of time. Lest I forget, another great 'Thillana' was composed by our legendary artist K. Venkatappa. I wish more of our singers and instrumentalists presented it for present-day listeners. □

Kathak Workshop in Mysore

K. Raghavendra Rao



Kathak workshop conducted by Pt. Tirathram Azad

Kathak, a major classical dance form of our country has three distinct 'ghatanas', each bearing the name of the city where it flourished. They are the Lucknow, Jaipur and Varanasi. The well-known Kathak guru of the Jaipur variation, Pandit Tirathram Azad conducted a six-day refresher course in Kathak in Mysore in January this year.

Around 40 aspirants including four boys took part in the refresher course which was organised by Raasa Vrunda of Nandini Eswar, an erstwhile student of the veteran Guru Uma Rao of the local Sri Lalithakala Academy had also been a student of Pandit Azad.

There were two sessions each day, one in the morning and the other in the evening to suit the convenience of college-going students.

Pt. Tirathram is a name to reckon with in the realm of Kathak dance. A dancer choreographer, capable writer and a renowned guru, Pt. Azad was associated with the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, Delhi, for 28 years as Head of the Department of Kathak. He was also the Founder-Director of Nateshwar Kala Mandir and Nruthya Kala Nikeran, Delhi.

Titles and Awards that have been conferred upon him are legion. He has served as Examiner and as visiting Professor in many Universities. He himself had the good fortune to learn Kathak from greats like Gurus Giriraj, Narayan Prasad, Chiranjilal and Maharaj Krishnakumar. He learnt classical music from Ustad Meher Ali of Talwandi Gharana.

Pt. Azad has toured many

countries in Europe and given performance and lecture demonstrations. The dance-dramas he has choreographed, like Shakuntala, Panchatantra, Rabindranath Tagore's Valmiki-Prathiba, Harivamsh Rai Bachchan's Madhushala, etc. are well known. He has also authored three works: Kathak Praveshika, Kathak Shringar and Kathak Darpan, which are popular texts.

He has trained many disciples in the Jaipur style of Kathak. One who rose like a meteor but got extinguished suddenly due to a heart attack was Durgalal, who had become a legend at a very early age. Pt. Azad is yet to get over that great loss. He feels that the future of Jaipur Gharana depends mainly on two persons i.e., Charan Giridhar Chaand son of Narayanaprasadji and Rajendra Gangani.

This was the second visit of Pt. Tirathram Azad to Mysore. He recollected he had conducted a workshop during a visit in 1981 under the auspices of Karnataka Sangeetha Nruthya Academy.

The students who took part in the work-shop are all learning Bharathanatyam under Nandini. They have attended a similar workshop in Odissi earlier. With their dance background, they had



Kathak workshop conducted by Pt. Tirathram Azad

no difficulty in picking up the steps, movements, stance and co-ordinate commendably well in the short span of six days.

When this writer

complimented the maestro on the remarkable achievement of his students, he acknowledged with his characteristic remark "Ishwar ki Iecha".

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Her firm footedness in the pheras (chakkars), be they of 21 or the 27, be they sraight and back halts or the diagonals—spoke of her prowess acquired in such a short span of 4 years, in this art form. Kumidini Lekhia's choreography flowed merrily down through Jayanthi's rendering and Kalanidhi Narayanan's training in abhinaya came out with pleasant clarity and emotive appeal.

The Guru Vandana and Govinda Vandana, the warm ups followed by the teen taal and the doha were rendered with aplomb and the right emphasis on technique and grace.

The bhajan and thumri brought in the scope for bhakti and abhinaya, while the Tarana rounded off the recital as an appropriate finale.

Debutante Savitha Rao sang well beyond her experience would suggest—a credit to her potential as an up and coming vocalist. Praveen D. Rao on the Tabla and S. Mahesh on the flute were equi to the task.

All in all, a pleasant and aesthetically fulfilling experience.

FAC

Firm footedness marks Kathak fare



M.E. Jayanthi

When a dancer, schooled in one distinct classical style, takes to a different style, it could be extremely difficult for her (him) to carry the authenticity of the latter without allowing intrusions from the other.

The Kathak recital of M.E. Jayanthi, originally a Bharathanatyam dancer, having been a student of Marmada, at the ADA Ranga Mandira recently took credit for keeping the identity of the form in tact.

Memorable Musical Excursion

The practice sessions for the "Panchadasa Veena Ensemble" were both interesting and challenging. When I got a call from one of my artiste friends to inform me about the practice, I began to flutter. To be chosen to play in a group concert for an important occasion like the Memorial Day of one of our renowned musicians is a matter of honour and pride. I was thrilled, to say the least.

I had tried very hard to play the Darbari Kaanada Tillana, the previous day. I rehearsed it vocally while travelling through the busy Gowripalya roads, en route Basavanagudi. On reaching the venue, the residence of Guru R.K. Suryanarayana there was a surprise in store. It had been decided to drop that Tillana in preference to Shivananjini—equally new to

me. In fact, of the seven compositions finally presented on the stage on that December evening excepting the Navaragamalika Varnam, the rest were unfamiliar to me. Hence the tension at the challenging task.

Xeroxing the script could be done in minutes; what about xeroxing them on the mind? I would break into a cold sweat, at the very thought of the daunting task. Added to this, the others were all near-perfect in their exposition, and played with ease and abandon. One, they were all much younger than me; two, I had to learn everything afresh! However, having committed, I had little choice.

Next, when 'Brocheva' (Khamach) was mooted as a

possible entry, it was very welcome as I was familiar with it. Who is not familiar with that famous kriti of Vasudevacharya? But, there was disappointment again. 'Brocheva' was out, though not very clear. Why?

Then there was this Swarajati of Veena Subbanna in Karnataka Kaapi, a Kharaharapriya Janya. It sounded like Devamanohari sometimes, Kaanada at others. It is a beautiful composition, with full of intricate swara-patterns woven most interestingly to ensure a flying start to a concert.

While all the others strummed and twanged away heartily, I limped along with many halts and slips. Besides being young and carefree, they were also jolly and generous. I could always ask any one of them when in doubt and each without exception lent a helping hand with a smile.

The practice-sessions had their lighter side too. One of the players—an extremely talented one—tended to go a bit too fast for the rest to comfortably keep pace with. We used to joke! If the whole concert was of forty minute duration, if that fast-track artiste led the team, it would be over in less than twenty! However being sweet tempered, the artiste took our



The Panchadasa Veena Ensemble

jokes in good humour, tried hard and succeeded in suiting his pace in tune with the others. This gentleman, once during the brisk and vigorous play, when the string snapped, fixed it in under three minutes, before our very eyes! He did it real fast.

Another day—it seemed unduly long and hard—we had played the Swarajati at least fifteen times and still some of us could not get it right. At the end of the day, another Basaveshwaranagar-bound friend and me were offered a lift by a kind young girl in her big Maruti Van. This was very welcome, as we would be half way home if we got off at Malleswaram. As we happily got into her vehicle, she put on some taped music. 'Raga-Sama' was soothing to our nerves and made us feel good. It was a pleasant ride and thanking her gratefully, we made our way home.

Another evening, a co-player, a stall artiste of AIR, Bangalore, and I were travelling in a BMTC bus, which would take us to Navrang Circle. The bus was jam-packed and having paid for two tickets, I somehow lost my purse which also contained my house-keys in addition to some small changes.

We had practised for a week incessantly. At last I could say I had reached a stage when I could play along without too many halts and slips. Now, I had to get myself a pick-up. All the others had

their own. Here again one young player offered one—which, she said, she always carried in her handbag—in case of emergencies. I could take hers as a last resort. In the music shop, I was told they had run out of stock and it would take two weeks or more to get fresh supplies. Here, by a lucky stroke, I got acquainted with a co-shopper, who had a spare pick-up she has ready to sell. All I had to do was go to her house, pay and own the pick-up. This I did pronto! I thanked her heartily and thanked my stars too.

On the evening of the

concert, all 15 of us were there well in time, and our places on the stage marked out. We took up position and when the compere announced the programme with our names, our ears mingling with pleasurable anticipation, we played away. The evening ended happily for all of us. The concert went off well and the encouraging applause was music to our ears!

The 'Sugandharaja' garlands which we were offered at the end somehow epitomised the day's events to me. It would remain a sweet, fragrant memorable evening for me.

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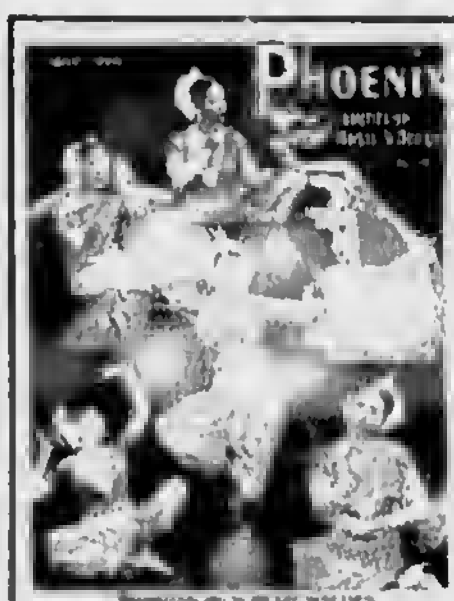
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